

UPDATE



TAKE THE 2016 KVR TRAIL CHALLENGE!

Summer is a great time of year to get out and explore the more than 50 miles of KVR trails. Hitting the trail is a great way to get out and enjoy nature, it's easy to start, and it's also a great form of exercise. And while you're at it, you'll want to participate in the first annual KVR Trail Challenge. Adults are challenged to hike all 60 trail segments, and kids are challenged to hike 20 trail segments within the Reserve during the 2016 calendar year. Participants can stop in the Visitor Center to pick-up a form or visit <http://kickapoovalley.wi.gov/Recreation/Trails> to print a form. All completed forms must be delivered or postmarked by December 31, 2016. Everyone who completes the Trail Challenge will receive a small prize and a chance to win other prizes!

WALNUT PLANTATION 'DISCOVERY'

By Jim Dalton,

Bigfoot Forestry Manager

Mixed forest plantings have an unexpected and stellar example of success in the "Bridge 8 Woods", a large unbroken tract of forest designated a State Natural Area. The inconspicuous red pine-black walnut stand, located just east of Highway 131 along the Horse Trail, originated in the early 1970's when the landowner at the time planted alternating rows of red pine and black walnut seedlings on a small ridge-top.

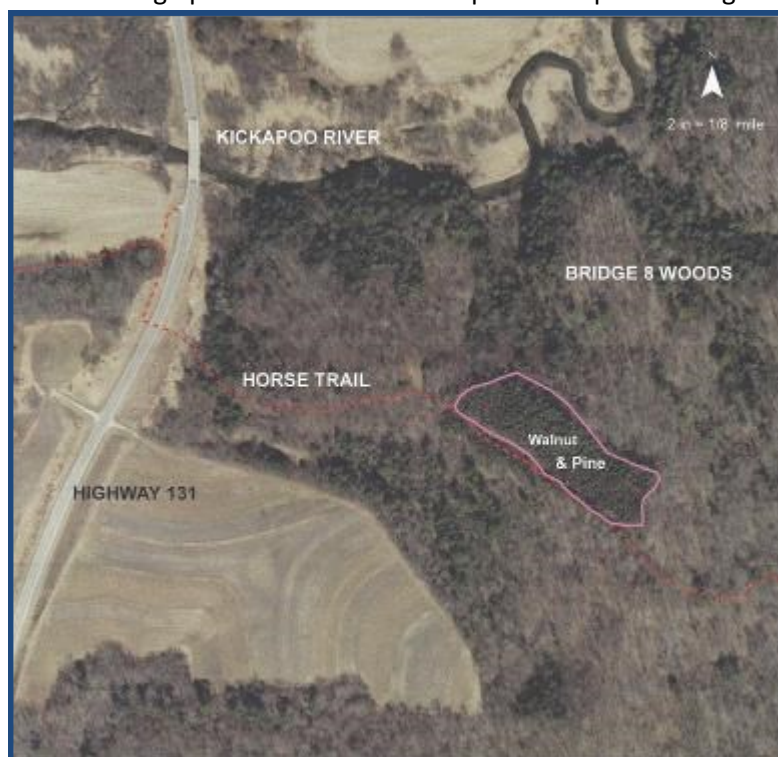
Upon hiking into the 5-acre stand last spring it was much to my surprise to find tall, straight walnut trees vigorously reaching upward amidst the anticipated red pines! A significant characteristic of this high quality walnut stand is the

average height these trees have attained, placing them at the top end of the black walnut growing chart.

How can this be? Black walnut of a high site quality on a ridge-top in a red pine plantation?

Mixed forest plantings began in the Driftless Area in the 1960's to 70's. Tree Farmers realized that companion plantings of different trees might result in better growth characteristics of some of our valuable hardwood trees, like black walnut.

They originally chose native white pine to inter-plant with black walnut so the pine could shade grass competition with wide reaching side limbs and later encourage walnut tree heights by growing a little faster alongside the walnut rows...the hardwoods would respond at age 20 or so, allocating growth resources in order to compete for overhead sunlight. Over time the effects of walnut produced juglone, a natural plant chemical that inhibits other plants from growing in close proximity, could affect the pines and send them into decline, leaving the walnut stand free to continue developing into a valuable timber resource.



(Walnut Plantation 'Discovery' cont.)

Is this how it happens? It *can* go this way, and there were several well-known plantings on private and state lands in Wisconsin where this phenomena was actually experienced and carefully studied. Each additional landowner-planting added more experience with results to evaluate. Planting less expensive conifer seedlings with higher priced hardwood seedlings soon became a practical way to lower tree planting costs where 600+ trees/acre were established.

It wasn't long before the idea spread to experimentation with other fine hardwoods, like red and white oak, and using other companion trees like red pine, larch or tamarack and spruce. There are mixed tree planting sites located all over the Driftless Area now where the benefits of forest diversity integrate with timber production.

Not every mixed tree planting is successful in terms of preferred growth and development of a desirable tree. But, there are other benefits that can be attributed to the community, like plant and wildlife habitat diversity, long term carbon sequestration, forest soil traits that improve water conservation, scenery enjoyment and a sense of achievement for the Tree Farmer.

Keep up the good work, all you tree planters out there! And stop by sometime to look at KVR's inherited example of modern forestry.



BIRD'S EYE PRIMROSE

by Ben Johnston, KVR Staff



The Bureau of Natural Heritage (WI DNR) 2016 rare plant list identifies 322 plants in the State of Wisconsin as Special Concern (192), Threatened (58) or Endangered (72).

Within the KVR, the special concern Bird's Eye Primrose (*Primula mistassinica*) grows on moist shaded cliffs along the Kickapoo River. Elsewhere in the state, the primrose is found in eleven counties, along calcareous pools and Great Lakes sand dunes.

The flower blooms in mid May into June, identified by a yellow centered flower with 5 notched white, pink or slight pale blue petals on a leafless, 2-8 inches tall stalk. Oblong leaves are found at base.

UW-Herbarium records indicate 8 locations of the Bird's Eye Primrose in Vernon County, all within the Kickapoo Valley. Six are within the borders of the KVR.

Volunteers made efforts to relocate and survey KVR's Bird's Eye Primrose populations in Spring 2016. Six locations were confirmed. A 1976 (R. Read) record location was reconfirmed. Due to ambiguity of other previous site records, it is uncertain at this time if the five locations surveyed in 2016 have been documented previously or if these are "new". Site populations ranged from 4 to close to 100 flowering plants among the sites. Additional surveys are intended for 2017.

Susan Cushing, Sarah Chapman, Joan Peterson, Paul Hayes, and Ben Johnston assisted with the 2016 Bird's Eye Primrose Survey. More information on Rare Plant Monitoring can be found at the [WI DNR Rare Plant Monitoring Program](#).

What's Happening!

June 16—KRMB Mtg.—6:30 PM

June 17—Family Campfire Program—6:30-8PM

June 18—Summer Solstice Stargazing

June 22—*Driftless Dialogue*: Impacts on Bird Biodiversity

July 1—Dam Challenge Registration Opens

July 22—Paint with Friends—6PM

July 27—*Driftless Dialogue*: TBA—6:30PM

Aug. 4—Education & Tourism Mtg.—5:30PM

Aug. 10—Land Management Mtg.—5:30PM

Aug. 12—Perseids Stargazing Party—8-10PM

Aug. 18—KRMB Mtg.—7PM

Aug. 25—Adopt-a-Trail Potluck—6-8PM

Sep. 15—KRMB Mtg.—7PM

MEET OUR 2016 EDUCATION INTERN

Hello, KVR community! My name is Kevin Whited-Ford, and I



will be serving as this summer's Environmental Education Intern. To break that title down a little I will be assisting the various summer camp instructors, organizing camp materials, and providing snack prep. I am a Geology major, and I am pursuing an Outdoor Education designation at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana where I will be starting my sophomore year in the fall. I

spent much of my early years in Viroqua, Wisconsin and have frequented the Reserve with school, family and friends many times. I am an avid wilderness enthusiast enjoying canoeing, backpacking, and most of all rock climbing.



Chair Ron Johnson thanks retiring KRMB member, local representative Al Szepe, at the April 2016 meeting

NATURE NOTES

by Kevin Whited-Ford, KVR Education Intern

As the weather improves and you start finding yourself enjoying the outdoors more and more, it is necessary to refresh one's memory of the parts of the outdoors that can be a little less than enjoyable if not treated with care. One of these parts is Wild or Poison Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*). The sap of Wild Parsnip contains compounds that when exposed to the sun can cause chemical burns if they are in contact with the skin. Continued exposure to the sun after



the burns manifest will cause the burns to worsen. Symptoms of exposure to Wild Parsnip include redness, rash, and blisters. These burns can be quite unfortunate in many ways, similar to the rash produced from contact with Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*).

Simple ways to avoid getting Parsnip sap on your skin include wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants and taking care not to break or crush Parsnip. Additionally, make sure you keep any parts of your skin you believe may have come in contact with the sap away from the sun. If you spend time outdoors in the night and think there is a possibility of coming in contact with Wild Parsnip, be sure to wash up before exposing your skin to sunlight as the sap may persist in your skin long enough to burn you the next day.

All this said, the root of Parsnip is edible and can be readily added to many dishes that would be complemented by root vegetables. So, be cautious with the sap but most definitely add Parsnip to your next meal.



WEISTER CREEK PROJECT UPDATE

by Marcy West, Executive Director

Phase II of the Weister Creek Restoration Project is complete from the 24 Valley Road bridge and continues south along the Creek corridor. Rock was stockpiled throughout the winter and placed by Department of Natural Resource (DNR) equipment operators throughout the spring. In this section, special attention was given to creating small depressions where backwater and spring ponding provides habitat for amphibians. Seeding for erosion control in the short-term and native grasses for the long term was completed by the KVR Field Crew. This section will also have a gravel access area to accommodate up to four cars for day use parking and allows continued access for the snowmobile trail in winter. The project continues to be a combined effort through the in-kind and/or funding support of DNR, Vernon County Land & Water Conservation Department, Trout Unlimited and a host of TU Chapters too numerous to mention, the Ho-Chunk Nation and KVR. Stay tuned for Phases 3-5!



Phase I at one-year-old



Phase II recently completed

